

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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COUNTRY	Bulgaria	REPORT NO.	
SUBJECT	The Belene Camp	DATE DISTR.	3 March 1953
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THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

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1. The largest concentration camp in Bulgaria is located on Belene Island¹ (N 43-40, E 25-12), on the Danube. The camp, which was small in the beginning, now extends over the entire span of the island. It is located between the village of Belene and the towns of Nikopol and Svishtov. The surface of the island is 73,000 hectares. There are five stockades (sic - hereafter referred to as compounds) on the island, four of which are for men. The other is for women who were brought to the island from the Nozharevo Camp.²
2. Prisoners are sent to the camp by the State Security Police, and not by judicial or administrative authorities. The State Security do not tell a prisoner the length of his term when he is sent to the camp.
3. It is estimated that there are 10,000 men and women in the Belene camp at the present time.³ Of these, 1,300 were in compound 2 during the first three months of 1952.⁴ In addition to the Bulgarian prisoners, there were 70 Greeks and 25 Yugoslavs in the camp. The Greek contingents were largely former partisans and former prisoners of Markos⁵ who had been sent to Bulgaria. The majority of the interned Yugoslavs are deserters who are not trusted by the Bulgarian State Security Police.
4. All the inmates, both men and women, have to work and fill very high work quotas. They are building a levee around the island which will serve for protection against floods. Although regular working hours are eight per day, the inmates have to work up to 10 and 15 hours in order to fill their quotas.⁶
5. Food quotas are very low. Those prisoners who fulfill their work quotas receive 720 grams of bread per day, while those who only partially fulfill them receive 500 grams. Sick persons and those unfit for work receive 360 grams of bread per day. Breakfast, which consists of tea, is distributed irregularly, that is, only when sugar is available. Lunch and dinner consist of one half of the military ration of either beans or macaroni. Because of hunger, prisoners catch frogs, turtles, and water snakes in order to increase their meager diet.

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6. Many inmates fall sick because of the poor food and there are many cases of tuberculosis. The camp but does not have a hospital but there is a very primitive infirmary with prisoners acting as doctors. Drugs are not available. The death rate is high and the bodies are buried in a cemetery on Belene.
7. The limits of the compounds are marked by small poles. Soldiers belonging to the so-called "Internal Units of the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior" act as guards. Prisoners who approach the small poles are often killed without warning by the guards who fire on anyone who sets foot across the line.

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Comments:

1. The proper name of the island is Persin Island. No doubt, however, with the establishment of a notorious forced labor camp there, it has come to be popularly referred to as "Belene Island". The camp takes its name from the village of Belene (N 43-40, E 25-06), which is on the mainland, across from the island.

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2. [REDACTED]
3. This is one of the highest estimates of the population of the Belene camp. Estimates generally average about 5,000 or 6,000, with former inmates giving the more conservative estimates.

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4. [REDACTED] estimated the number of inmates in compound 2 at 3,500. [REDACTED] estimate made by a former inmate) placed the figure between 700 and 1,000.
5. Probably a reference to General Marcos Vafiades, a Moscow-trained Communist who was in charge of the Greek Guerrilla forces in the north of Greece at one time.
6. Belene inmates are apparently engaged in two kinds of labor: farm work on the island and various construction projects, such as building levees, digging ditches and canals, off the island. [REDACTED]

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7. Probably a reference to the Vŭtreshni Voyski.

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The material contained in this report may well be only a repetition of the rumors concerning the Belene Camp which are constantly circling through Bulgaria. [REDACTED]

- 25X1X [REDACTED], as very few specific details (such as names of inmates, guards, etc.) are provided and because the estimates of the number of inmates in the entire camp and in compound 2 are considerably higher than average estimates, there is a possibility that this information is based not on fact but on the exaggerations of a rumor-ridden and frightened populace.

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